

September 7, 2017

U.S. Senator Rob Portman  
Chairman, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Portman:

Our organizations write to *strongly* support the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017 which will empower law enforcement to effectively combat online sex trafficking hubs that provide a safe haven for modern day slave traders. We commend you for shining a light on the online marketplaces that profit from the growing epidemic of sex trafficking in the United States, and we encourage Congress and President Trump to join your effort to amend Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to protect our most vulnerable citizens who are ensnared in the online sex trade.

Also, we want to thank you for your determined investigation of Backpage.com which has profited from the suffering of untold women and children by posting ads selling trafficking victims who end up being raped hundreds of times for money. Congress never intended Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to protect a business that tailored its site to make underage sex trafficking easier. Nonetheless, federal courts have ruled websites that facilitate sex trafficking are immune from lawsuits brought by their victims, no matter how complicit the sites are or how terrible the harm caused.

This is simply wrong and the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017 would clarify Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to ensure that websites that facilitate sex trafficking can be held liable and that their victims can get justice. The legislation would: allow victims of sex trafficking to seek justice against websites that knowingly or recklessly facilitated their victimization; would make knowing, commercial conduct that assists, supports, or facilitates a violation of federal sex trafficking laws a crime; and, would increase protection for trafficking victims by enabling state law enforcement officials, not just the federal Department of Justice, to take action against individuals or businesses that violate federal sex trafficking laws.

The Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017 is an important and critically needed reform that will protect women and children without undermining internet freedom or the first amendment. The vast majority of trafficking victims were sold on Backpage.com. Congress

never intended Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to serve as a liability shield to companies so that they could profit from the sale of women and children for sexual exploitation.

Thank you for considering the views of our members and supporters, for whom combatting human trafficking is one of their top legislative concerns.

Sincerely,

Timothy R. Head  
Executive Director  
Faith & Freedom Coalition

Dr. Russell Moore  
President  
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Patrick A. Trueman  
President & CEO  
National Center on Sexual Exploitation

David Christensen  
Vice President for Government Affairs  
Family Research Council

Penny Young Nance  
CEO and President  
Concerned Women for America LAC